



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2006

Bill to Pay Wrongly Convicted Inmates for Lost Time Signed by Governor

Bill Makes Payments to Those Exonerated by DNA a Priority

ST. LOUIS, Mo. – Inmates who are exonerated by a DNA test and proved actually innocent, but who fell outside the current timeframe set by law, will now begin receiving financial relief for their years of wrongful imprisonment. Steve Toney, proved innocent by DNA, joined Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, to watch Gov. Matt Blunt sign Senate Bill 1023 into law today. The measure creates a new line item in the state budget to pay wrongly convicted men and women, as well as continues a fund used to perform DNA tests of felons.

Gibbons said three innocent people exonerated years ago have not received any form of compensation from the state of Missouri for the lost years of their lives.

“The state made a mistake,” Gibbons said. “This new law makes sure these three men, and any others who were wrongly imprisoned, will be paid for the loss of their liberty.”

One of the state’s more high-profile exoneration cases involved Steve Toney who spent 13 years and 10 months in prison convicted of a rape he did not commit. Toney was exonerated in 1996 by DNA evidence, but has not received any compensation from the state. Toney, as well as two others, were never paid because a previous law exempts anyone exonerated by DNA before Aug. 28, 2003.

“It is indefensible that a man lost almost 14 years of his life serving a sentence for a crime he did not commit, and the state of Missouri has not repaid him,” Gibbons said. “With this new law and this year's budget including the funding, these payments will finally be a priority.”

In 2003, Missouri adopted a compensation plan to pay those found actually innocent as a result of DNA exonerations the sum of \$50 per day for each day of wrongful imprisonment. The total is paid in annual payments not to exceed \$36,500 until the total due is paid. The state estimates the three innocent men are owed a total of \$875,000 in compensation.

The new law takes effect on August 28.

###